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## AN APPRECIATION OF JOSEF ISRAËLS

In her "Vision of Poets" Mrs. Browning has perhaps written the finest appreciation the world may find, in so small a compass, of the poet Euripides:

"Our Euripides, the human,  
With his droppings of warm tears,  
And his touches of things common,  
Till they rose to touch the spheres!"

He belongs to the morning time, and lives so deeply in the primitive and permanent that whenever men in recent days touch the essential and primal, something sings in the spirit of Euripides. Robert Browning speaks of these unique moments in life when the streams at the heart of things flow forth, and when one is enchanted by a "sunset touch" or "some chorus from Euripides." One has to go back to an earlier age than ours to find a parallel for the greatest of modern Dutch painters, who lately was signally honored at The Hague.

Josef Israëls, who is a Hebrew of the Hebrews, "of the stock of Israel, of the Tribe of Benjamin," is yet so much more than an "Israelite in deed and in truth," as was Nathaniel of old, that he illustrates in the simplicity and beauty of his life, as well as in the fluency and power of his art, the true Greek spirit. He is the Euripides of modern pictorial art. No man approaches him in the humanizing influence which he has exercised to the utter demolition of the inhuman and to the partial destruction of the unhuman in the painting of pictures.

Millet with the French peasant and Burns with



PEN-AND-INK SKETCH  
By Josef Israëls

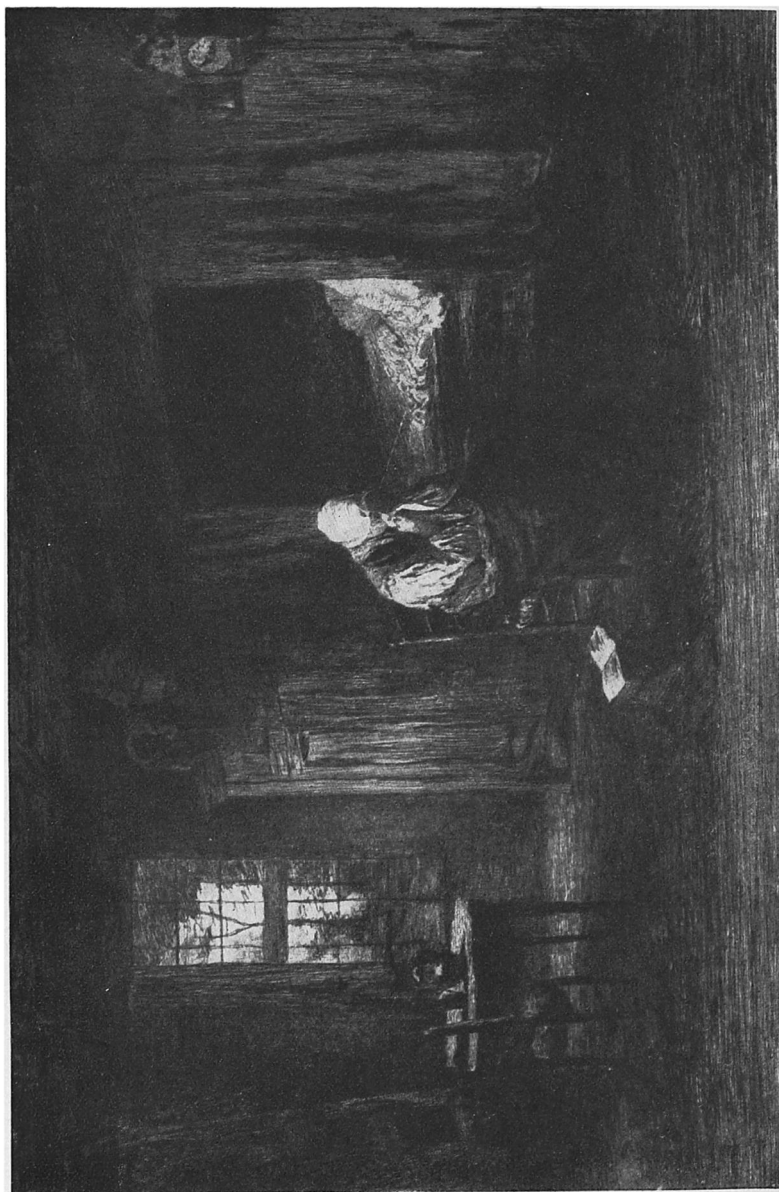
the Scotch peasant touch less strongly and tenderly the chords divine which vibrate through the human. I once asked a distinguished tragedian why he did not reproduce Browning's drama of "Strafford." I did think that Macready scarcely gave either Browning or "Strafford" a fair chance many years ago. The modern tragedian, whose every look and syllable are art itself, told me that "Strafford" lacked "*human* interest." No artist is his total self until he invests all his powers and experiences in the character he portrays. It is impos-



ORIGINAL ETCHING  
By Joseph Israëls

sible to do this in "Strafford," for he and his career do not manifest the primal and ineradicable emotions, ideas, and purposes of humanity.

On the other hand, Josef Israëls has painted the heart of the human child so completely, even in his treatment of the oldest of his characters—for his figures are nothing less than characters—and he has also discovered for us the significance of laborious age, or resistless strength of body and mind, even in the smallest tot playing with boats upon a little ocean of his own, that one must turn to him as one turns to a supreme poet for the interpretation of himself. The secret of this magnificent sweep of things and of the validity of his interpretation lies wholly in his personality. He is one of those who illustrate the truth of the saying that "we are all human, yet some of



ALONE IN THE WORLD  
By Josef Israëls





A SON OF THE PEOPLE  
By Josef Israëls



us are more so than others." Israëls's humanity, considered as a factor for discovering and interpreting the human phases of this universe, is an item of character, and therefore is always in evidence. We feel it in his paintings, so appealingly eloquent everywhere, because it is of him, and is therefore not less convincing when one is admitted into the home and life of this true grandson of Rembrandt. Whatever a man is by birth and tradition and hereditary equipment, if he lives deeply and broadly enough, he will strike out into the deep, rich humanity which is larger than himself and root himself there. This is illustrated in the fact that there is a Greek element easily discernible when the extremities of Israëls's power are called upon. He is cosmopolitan and ageless. It is like living in an age entirely as Ruskin says, "the greatest men, whether poets or historians, live by constant law," and at the same time, living through the age into the ageless, as did Shakespeare and Rembrandt, touching the universal, or at least finding a symbolism which helps both the temporal and the eternal to understand one another. Every Dutch item in Israëls's product is fruit from the all-human tree.



PEN-AND-INK SKETCH  
By Joseph Israëls

As I have watched him, painting with the ardor and devotion with which Isaiah prophesied and David ruled in Israel, he seemed to be uttering that one prayer from one of the Psalms most familiar to his boyhood: "Open Thou mine eyes, and I will behold wondrous things out of Thy law." Here was a Jew so intensely living his life that his essential humanity burned through it. He went into the larger from the less only by being utterly loyal to the less. It took years for Israëls to find himself more than a Jewish pharisee in thinking and in art expression. In his emancipation from hard formulary he, like the great Jew Jesus, appealed to the mightier, fresher, and essential Hebrewdom, which was quite overgrown with the traditions



THE SHIPWRECKED MARINER

By Josef Israëls

of scribe and pharisee. But Israëls has left many a canvas, which shows that he was a true son of the law. After a few years of laborious legalism (which is always necessary in order that we may get from our Sinai to our Calvary in anything), there rose a spirit of freedom and power within Israëls, which at length got beyond all "the mint, anise, and cumin of the law," and found the artistic gospel which was in Franz Hals, Rembrandt, and Ver Meer of Delft, as it was a religious gospel in Isaiah the prophet and David the singer. It was love triumphant, not over law, but by law, and through law.

When he was a child in Gröningen at ten years of age, his attention was given to the Talmud, and for several years he was spoken of as the coming rabbi. He has been credited with keeping up his studies in rabbinical lore, and with a profound mastery of the literatures of the law and the prophets. His art-method has grown only as his character-method. Faithfulness to the few things alone has made him ruler over many things. Personally, and from a literary and philosophical point of view, he is one of the interesting, and I shall say impressive, men of modern times. All the fine experience of soul which the Hebrew nation may have rescued from eloquent prophets, deep-toned psalmists, valiant kings, and aspiring servants of God everywhere, while these have been led through ages of grief and joy, now by the waters of Babylon and now before the marblé-turreted temples of Jerusalem, has wrought upon this face and head, creating also the attitude of bodily grace, inspiring the vigor and nobility which are but outward expressions of that inner reality whose influence the history of art will never forget—Josef Israëls.

There is a kind of Anglo-Saxon particularly in evidence to-day

who is so little in spirit and so great in form only, that he preserves for us only the peculiarities of the Saxon. He is very much of a force in a falling market, as life's commerce goes on. He cheapens everything. Here is a Jew so careless of literalism and form, and so suffused and exalted by the spiritual qualities of that most insistent and self-evidencing race, that we realize in him, not a single peculiarity of his own people, but a mental and a spiritual cosmopolitanism, fascinating if it were not so nearly majestic. In the drawing which represents his being presented at the Royal Academy in London this spring, by the larger and handsome Alma-Tadema, only Israëls's back is seen, but the whole man is there, and no one would mistake this vibrant and intense physical personality for anything else than the instrument of a high and beautiful soul. It is so in his art, for wherever anything of his appears, it is incontestably of Israëls and of all of him. No one who has beheld one of the many attestations of honor and reverence given to him by the people at Amsterdam and The Hague can fail to recognize the fact that he is the indubitable and worthy center of it all. As I saw the vast and brilliant audience which ranged from orchestra boxes to highest gallery, and observed the blaze of those gems which had long been possessed by the aristo-



RETURNING HOME  
By Josef Israëls  
Courtesy of W. Scott Thurber

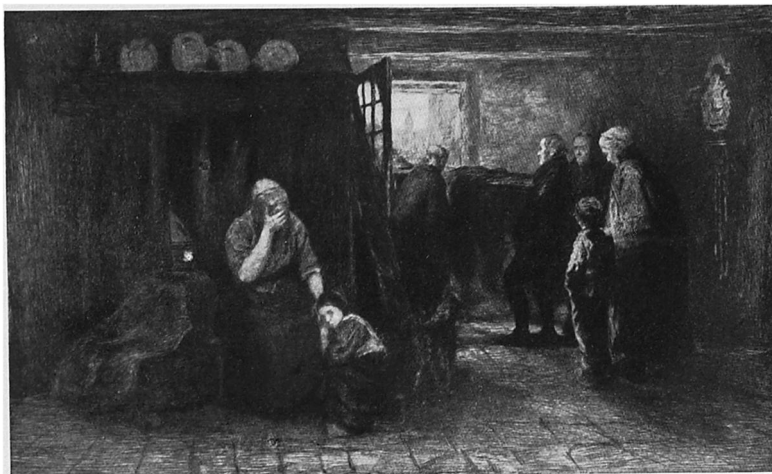


cratic families of Holland, I thought only the prima donna might punctuate the glory with a personal presence to be recognized. The most charming of modern singers was, however, wisely waiting to come to her own laurels at a later moment. A greater personality would first give piquancy to the scene. From an unobserved doorway, quite in front of the audience, came an insignificant, trembling figure, crowned with snowy white hair, and triumphant with three score years and ten of achievement. He was in evening dress, and wore medals of his various orders. They seemed almost too numerous for so slight and unimposing a figure. In an instant the whole audience was upon its feet; a smile from the venerated artist made the jewels more radiant, and the great assemblage stood until Josef Israëls had taken his seat.

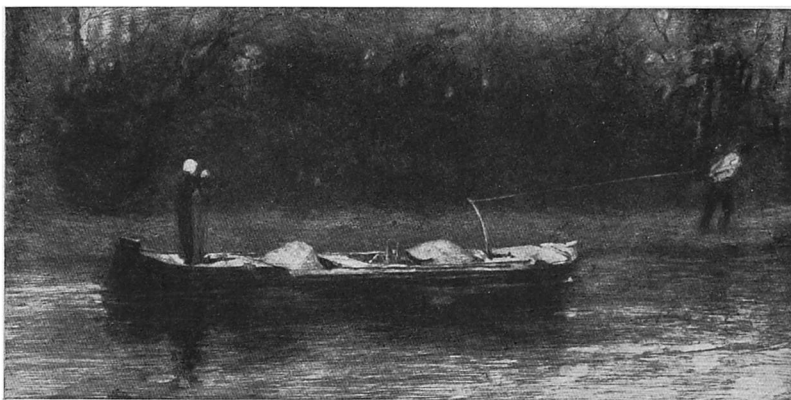
All arts, pursuits, and achievements of men are interesting to this open-eyed human being. I once sent to him as a gift the "Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson." His letter in reply is so characteristic of vigorous and many-sided mentality that I venture to print it, even with the quaint and charming mistakes which the great Dutchman makes in handling English:

MY DEAR SIR:

Many thanks for your kind letter and for your conversation with Joseph Jefferson through which I come in the possession of the fine volume of the autobiographies of your friend. He is a very pleasant story teller, and I shall send him reciprocally a book that I wrote in Dutch, but who also is translated in English. It is my voyage in Spain, and illustrated by myself. As I do not know the address of Mr. Jefferson,



FROM SHADOW INTO SUNLIGHT  
By Josef Israëls



THE CANAL  
By Josef Israëls

you will, perhaps, be so friendly to send. I was wondered about the fine engravings on the autobiography and how good is it printed and edited. I have not yet been quite through it, but the part I read is very interesting and amusing, and I would not wait too long for thanking you and the author. Therefore, this:—*Art is a commonwealth for itself and to deal with members of that community has for me always a great charm.*

Believe me, dear sir,

Affectionately yours,

JOSEF ISRAËLS.

The commonwealth of which he speaks is broadly represented in his library and studio, on the tables of which one will see magazines in all modern languages of culture, fine drawings from continental and oriental studios, choice bits of sculpture, and the portraits of his friends.

As an author of the book on Spain, he is luminous, full of humor, and most interesting and instructive when, for example, he speaks of Velasquez and Rembrandt:

“‘Eh bien!’ said my French friend. ‘Was I exaggerating when I talked to you about the glorious Velasquez?’

“Erens pointed out that it was the fashion lately to place Velasquez above Rembrandt.

“‘That is true,’ I replied, ‘I have heard it said; but I think the opinion frivolous. For, although Velasquez is an exceptional painter, so is Rembrandt, and he is much more besides. If Rembrandt had never taken a brush in hand, his etchings alone would have placed him among the foremost creative artists. The excellence of his talent as a painter is but a small portion of all that combines to form the enormous genius of this jewel with its many facets, his imagination, his simplicity, the poetry of his somber, mysterious effects, the depth and virtuosity of his workmanship. Velasquez never painted heads

like the *Staalmeesters*. The hair lives, the eyes look at you, the foreheads wrinkle at you. This is my first visit to Madrid, and I rejoice at being able to enjoy this, to me, new talent of Velasquez. But when I look at his masterpiece, 'Las Lanzas,' and think of Rembrandt's 'Night Watch,' I continue to regard the Spanish *chef-d'œuvre* with the greatest appreciation and delight, but in my thoughts I fall back before the 'Night Watch' as before a miracle. There you have a breadth of brush that no one has ever equaled. All of which painting is capable is united in that: fidelity to nature and fantasy, the loftiest masterliness of execution, and in addition a sorcery of light and shadow that is all his own. Rembrandt's was



CHILDREN OF THE SEA  
By Josef Israëls

an unique mind, in which the mystic poetry of the North was combined with the warmth and virtuosity of the South. The work of Velasquez, on the other hand, glows calm-

ly and peacefully from these glorious walls. He works, but does not contend; he feels gloriously, but wages no combat; Rembrandt's gloomy silence in darkness, his striving after the infinite and inexplicable, are unknown to him; serene and sure he sits enthroned upon the high place which he has made his; but Velasquez's art embraces only his own surroundings, whereas Rembrandt's plays its part in every human life, and in addition strives after the historic and the unseen."

If the finest thought and enterprise of the greatest of Hebrews have ever disclosed their true roots, it is in the fact that they have led civilization to enthrone the little child instead of the pretentious scholiast or the bejeweled monarch. This is precisely what Israëls has done with the art of painting. Hebrew of the Hebrews, he has "set the child in the midst of them," and he has said, "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the heaven which I feel in my heart."

Another phase of the matter is this: he has irradiated life's commonplace with the glory of the human soul at its highest. Fisher-

men and their toils, plain mothers with their children in cradles, and aged scribes or old-clothes sellers, have marched along in the procession with his wonderful and unsurpassed delineation of the grandeur of Saul, king of Israel. No man, save Robert Browning, has been at once so poetic and philosophic in interpreting the David of Saul's tragic hour. But nature, aside from man, is equally responsible to him, for paradox that it may be, nature is never separable from man in his eyes. The range of interpretation of humanity manifested in the multitude of small and great which he has placed upon his canvases is not less wonderful when the skies, for example, of his pictures are studied with reference to the moods of mind which they indicate.

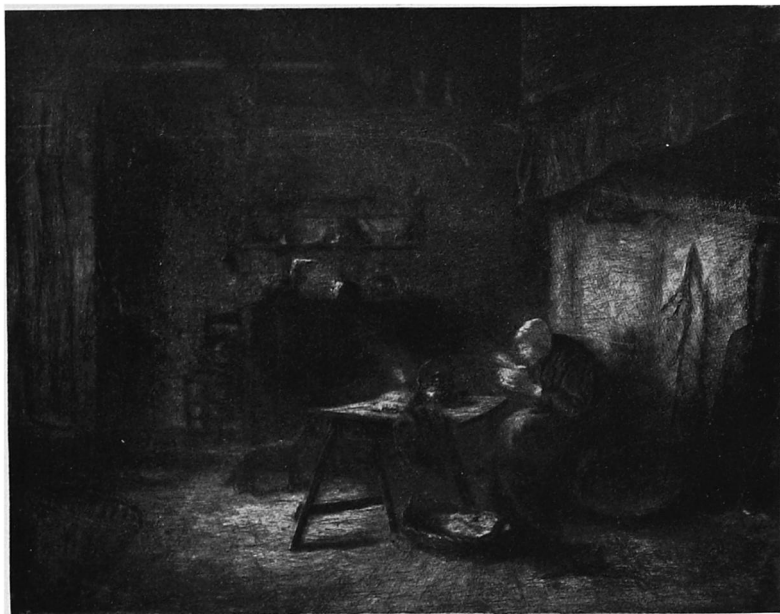


A YOUNG SEMSTRESS  
By Josef Israëls

Israëls does not live in a *duo*-verse, least of all in a *multi*-verse, but in a *uni*-verse. If a man is pulling a boat along a canal, and indicating to us the long way which goes through age to death, the skies above him are quivering with the moment in which every afternoon drops into eventide. No one since Rembrandt has so made the physical universe, which both of them have drawn upon but sparsely, so palpitant with human emotion, sympathy, desire, and an aspiration entirely human. Israëls might have been one of the great landscape-painters of all time. He

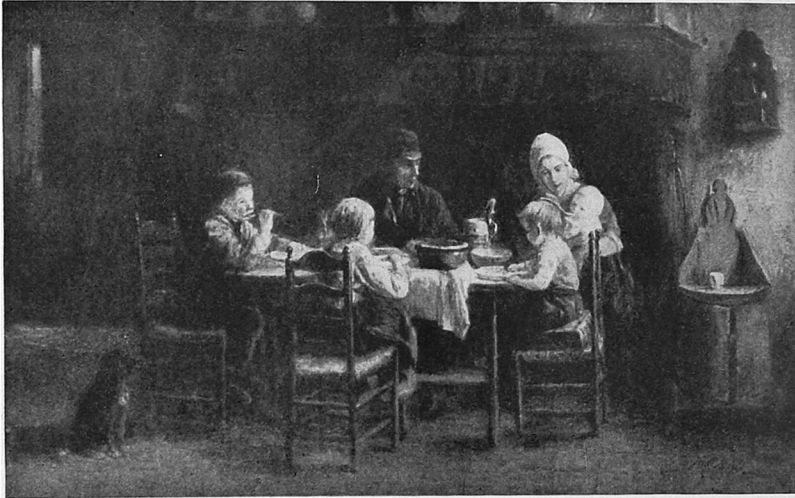


THE SKIPPER  
By Josef Israëls



A HUMBLE MEAL  
By Josef Israëls

has the directness of nature. A great painting must be full of vision, but not of re-vision. He has the visual power, and with it the virtuosity characteristic of Hals. A thoroughly systematic mind, like every man of genius, he is not a slave to a system. A man who can grow after seventy-five years have gone over him and through him to the superlative power which creates the "Saul" and "The Scribe," is far beyond the possibility of mannerism. Israëls has lived for this harvest of energy, insight,



THE EVENING MEAL  
By Josef Israëls

fluency, and adequacy of expression. In every artist's experience, intention and achievement, impression and expression, must be as nearly identical in the moment and motive as possible. In the creation of the mightier canvases of Israëls, these were contemporaneous. This is the divine quality of art. "God said: let there be light, and *there was light.*"

Mighty old man! The little aged body thou hast lived in and transfigured will fall away soon! Thou hast dealt with immortalities so patiently and joyously, that thou hast caught the breath of an endless future!

FRANK W. GUNSAULUS,  
President of Armour Institute, Chicago.

Arts Federation in co-operation with the Municipal Art Commission, and for organizations of similar character throughout the country.

♣ The government of Holland recently appointed an art commission to superintend the collection in Holland of art works for the St. Louis Exposition. Eleven rooms in the Fine Arts Building in St. Louis, between those of the American and German exhibits, have been assigned to Holland. The well-known marine artist, H. W. Mesdag, who gave a year ago a collection of paintings by the Barbizon painters to the museum at The Hague, has been chosen by the government of Holland as president of the commission. Willy Martens has been appointed secretary and Hubert Vos, of New York, royal acting commissioner. Mr. Martens will arrive in America in April to assist Mr. Vos in the hanging of the collection at St. Louis.

♣ An ingenious swindler in "high art" was recently brought to light by a case in the Paris courts. A picture dealer named Bureau had been disposing of false Corots, Millets, Harpignies, etc., to private collectors at fancy prices. A purchaser of one of the Harpignies, suddenly became suspicious of its genuineness and showed it to the artist himself. The latter denied being the painter. Then an investigation was made, and it was found that Bureau was carrying on a regular trade in landscape paintings of the Corot and Millet period. An artist named Reynolds made the copies, then M. Bureau submitted them to a process to give them the air of not being new and appended the signatures of the famous landscape artists.

♣ Adolf von Menzel has been telling a Berlin journal things out of school with regard to the training of artists. Neither schools nor "movements" should be encouraged with honors and diplomas. If a movement or a school has the requisite stuff in it, there will be no trouble about honors and prizes. "I am of the opinion," said he,



PEN-AND-INK SKETCH  
By Josef Israëls

"that great and good things may spring from any school; in the end the only question is whether they have done thorough work. It is not the school but the individual—that is my solution of the problem! Who can say what will be the result of the present efforts?

Perhaps they will throw off their cinders, perhaps the cinders will clog the growth of art."

✿ The picture exhibition which is held every year at the Parnassum, in Athens, has been formally opened by Prince Nicholas. A large number of Greek artists, both living in Greece and in foreign countries, sent in works, with the result that the Salon of this year is the largest ever held in Athens.

✿ Fashion rules the works of even the old masters. Just at present paintings by Sir Thomas Lawrence are the vogue in London, and particular prominence is to be given to works by that painter at the



SAILING THE BOAT  
By Josef Israëls

winter exhibition of old masters at the Royal Academy. The revival of interest in this famous English painter's work is said to be due to the French appreciation of its excellence. There is chance for cynical remark here concerning the judgment which values its own according to foreign standards. One might suppose that the English nation would stand by its own opinions, irrespective of what the people of other nations might think of its art products.





THE PANCAKE  
By Josef Israëls



MAKING THE TROUSSEAU  
By Josef Israëls

Louis XV. desk \$250; a Louis XVI. cabinet, with Vernis Martin panels; \$325; and two divans of the same period, \$380. Two Louis XV. clocks were sold. One from Versailles brought \$650, the other \$225. One of the small bits of antique ivory carving, an equestrian figure in ivory and silver, jeweled, brought \$400. Two large companion vases in soft paste Sèvres, signed "E. Siefferd," sold for \$1,020. Another signed "A. Fangerm" brought \$780. H. Pennington bought a Royal Vienna vase signed "O. Swierzina," for \$700. Mac-cari's cartoon of the frescoes for the Senate House of Rome were sold at low prices. They were as follows: "Regulus Taking Leave of Rome," \$250; "Cicero Denouncing Cataline," \$110; "The Blind Censor," \$200; "Carus Dentatus in his Cell," \$70; and "Defiance of Papirus," \$105. James McCormick of Brooklyn was the purchaser. Four smaller panels by the same artist brought \$40, \$21, \$35, and \$56, respectively. These cartoons were sold as a part of the collection of etchings, engravings, and water-colors. The highest price reached for prints was for Jacquet's etching of Meissonier's "Friedland," Arthur Tooth & Son paying \$550 for it. C. W. Kraushaar paid \$105 for the "Parting Day," an etching after Leader; the same sum was paid for the etching, "Noonday Rest," after Jules Bréton, and J. R. Davis gave \$115 for one of Haig's etchings. A crayon drawing of Bismarck by F. von Lenbach brought \$90.



A STUDY  
By Josef Israëls.

The sale of the pastels, water-colors, and oils of the late J. Wells Champney realized \$23,632.50. The following is a list of paintings sold, purchasers, and prices realized: Original Pastels—"Lucile," R. H. Halstead, \$105; "Beatrix," Mrs. George E. Dodge, \$165; "The Toreador's Daughter," E. C. Converse, \$205; "Pearls and

Lillies," R. H. Ingersoll, \$145; "The Antiquary's Daughter," Mrs. George E. Dodge, \$180; "Hesitation," Delmonico Gallery, \$180; "Hours of Idleness," Andrew W. Rose, \$100; "In Pensive Thought," W. Evarts Benjamin, \$170; "Phœbe," Mrs. C. L. Hackstaff, \$200; "Regret," E. L. Saird, \$210; "A Gypsy," Ingersoll, \$105; "Gloria in Excelsis Deo," E. C. Converse, \$100; "Sad Memories," Gail B.

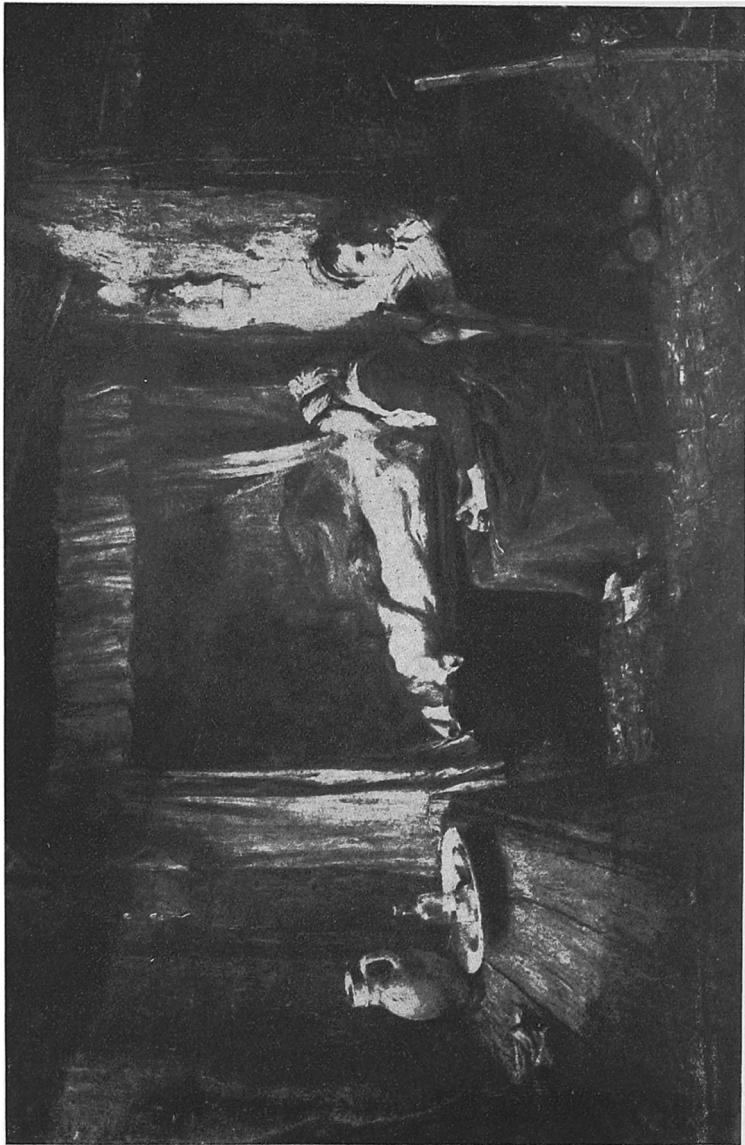


A STUDY  
By Josef Israëls

Munsil, \$1,000; "La Marquise," H. L. Satterlee, \$175. Copies in pastel—"Portrait of Mr. Angerstein, After Sir Thomas Lawrence," Charles Pfizer, \$110; "Robinetta," Richmond by order, \$120; "The Countess of Grammont, After Sir Peter Lely," Eugene Aenstein, \$200; "The Infant Samuel, After Sir Joshua Reynolds," Franks, \$130; "Miss Baillie," Richmond on order, \$130; "Madonna and Child, After Botticelli," Kurdler Co., \$180; "Madonna and Child, After Picture Attributed to Raphael," Knoedler & Co., \$180; "Portrait of Hendrickji Stoffens, After Rembrandt," Knoedler & Co., \$200;

"Portrait of Himself, by Anthony Van Dyck, \$300.

✱ Some remarkable prices were realized in London recently during the course of a sale of old English plate. A set of six Charles I.'s apostle spoons went for £280 (\$1,400), and another similar set brought £150 (\$750). A Queen Anne large two-handled cup, or porringer, dated 1703 sold for £140 (\$700), being at the rate of 120 shillings (\$30) an ounce. Then there was a Charles II. tankard, dated 1683, which went for £243 (\$1,215), being at the rate of 145 shillings (\$36) an ounce, and a Charles II. plain tankard sold for £130 (\$650), or 100 shillings (\$25) an ounce.



THE SICK MOTHER  
By Josef Israëls





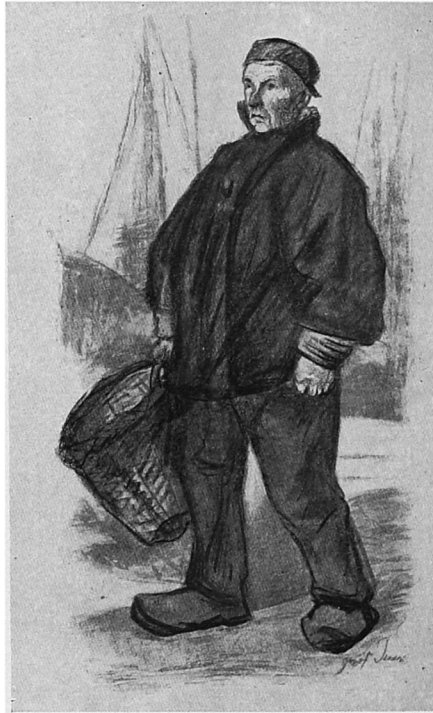
A RAY OF SUNSHINE  
By Josef Israëls



## SOME AMERICAN ART BOOKBINDERS

The writer of this article has, within the past year and a half, had the pleasure of arranging three exhibitions of the work of American "art" bookbinders, two in Richmond, Indiana, and one recently in Indianapolis, the latter placed with the annual exhibition of the art-crafts given by the Indianapolis Sketching Club. The aim has been in all three to make the exhibitions comprehensive and representative of the best that is being done in the art of bookbinding in this country. While the exhibitions were given to exploit the work of Americans primarily, a few examples of the work of foreigners were also shown, but the object has been chiefly to bring some of the less known workers in this art to public notice, as well as those who have come into a reputation.

There has been a vast deal of meaningless chatter of one sort and another within the past few years over what is vaguely, and in the opinion of a good many persons anomalously, termed "arts and crafts," exhibitions of strange and incomprehensible objects under this head having become a feature of various alleged "art centers," where frequently are displayed occasional genuine objects of art, whose originators have strongly protested against having them designated as the product of a "craft." The extreme absurdity of this combination of words was illustrated by the head-lines in a provincial paper some time since, which announced



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